

Advancing Effective Democracy

As identified in the National Strategy to Combat Terrorism (NSCT), the long-term approach in the War on Terror is the advancement of freedom and human dignity through democracy. The United States supports democratic reform and political freedom globally to help end terrorism and violent extremism. In Afghanistan and Iraq, 50 million people liberated by United States-led Coalitions from two of the world's most brutal regimes voted in open and transparent elections despite violence and intimidation. Since 9/11, millions of people in other Muslim countries have also been able to vote in democratic elections, including Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, and the West Bank/Gaza. Color revolutions brought democratic governments to power in Georgia and Ukraine. And in Liberia, Africa's first elected female leader took power, bringing an end to years of conflict and turmoil.

Elections are a visible sign of a free society, but they alone are not enough to advance democracy. Effective democracies exercise effective sovereignty and maintain order within their own borders, address causes of conflict peacefully, protect independent and impartial systems of justice, punish crime, embrace the rule of law, and resist corruption. Effective democracies also limit the reach of government, protecting the institutions of civil society. Effective democracies are the long-term antidote to the ideology of terrorism.

Because a lack of governance capacity impedes counterterrorism efforts and creates conditions ripe for the proliferation of terrorist movements, the United States is engaged in encouraging the rule of law, promoting democratic governance, and facilitating economic development. Efforts include:

- USAID operations in 26 countries and territories in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, and nearly 100 countries worldwide, with innovative programs emphasizing trade, education, health, and democracy.
- The Millennium Challenge Account, established to reinforce reform globally by providing additional resources to countries that govern justly, invest in their people, and promote economic freedom.
- The “Partnership for Progress and a Common Future” to support political, economic, and social reform in the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA), launched by the G-8 in 2004.
 - The United States and the G-8, together with regional partners in the Middle East, developed the Forum for the Future to advance freedom, prosperity, and opportunity. Bringing together leaders in government and civil society, the Forum is an opportunity to anchor reform in the region.
 - Through the BMENA initiative and the Forum, foreign, finance, and educational ministerial meetings are taking place.
 - In addition, the Forum brings together civil society and business in dialogues to energize and focus reform and connect these vital actors with government participants.
 - Among the BMENA initiatives supported by the G-8 are a Democracy Assistance Dialogue, a literacy and education initiative, and entrepreneurship training centers.